



Good evening Senator Harp, Representative Walker, Representative Candelaria, and members of the Committee. My name is Jesse White-Fresé, Executive Director of the Connecticut Association of School Based Health Centers. I am testifying today to encourage you to fully fund School Based Health Centers.

The School Based Health Center (SBHC) model is a cost-effective, efficient delivery system of medical, mental health, and dental services to Connecticut's children. You understand the benefits of bringing health services to children in their schools, and have demonstrated that through your investment in School Based Health Centers. Currently, 19 Connecticut communities benefit from school-based services in 75 school sites. Annually, 51,000 children and adolescents have access to the services available in their School Based Health Centers. 30% of those students are uninsured; many would not receive the care they need without a Center in their school.

School Based Health Centers are safety net providers for children and adolescents. By definition, a safety net provider maintains an "open door", offering access to patients regardless of their ability to pay. This clearly describes the School Based Health Centers that you have funded. As families continue to suffer from loss of employment and employer-sponsored health insurance, students are turning to the Centers for needed medical care and help with family stress. More than 5,300 children receive mental health treatment in their SBHC annually for a wide variety of serious mental health issues - and 98% return to class and continue to learn.

School Based Health Centers provide affordable health care. Students have immediate access to care in the School Based Health Center. When they receive care in the early stages of a medical or mental health problem, they avoid the costly care that results from delaying treatment. In most cases, the health care provided in the Centers keeps students in school and out of the emergency room. In the 2008-2009 school year, 1,608 nebulizer breathing treatments were provided in the SBHCs at a fraction of the cost of emergency department

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North Haven, CT 06473

203-230-9976

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care. 96% of those students returned to class after their treatment. Connecticut benefits both from reduced Medicaid costs and increased educational value. Numerous studies nationwide have shown that School Based Health Centers reduce inappropriate emergency room use, increase the use of primary care, and result in fewer hospitalizations among regular users.

School Based Health Centers keep children healthy and in school. Students that are healthy and attend school maximize their opportunities for learning. School Based Health Centers support schools and support families. We know that cuts to health care always impact vulnerable families. When family stress increases, we often see increases in substance abuse and domestic violence and the resulting impact on our children. In School Based Health Centers, reductions in funding directly translate into reductions in staffing, early closure of Centers, less days per week of service, and a loss of the health lifeline that is critical for so many children. The Connecticut Association of School Based Health Centers strongly urges you not to cut this vitally important safety net for our most vulnerable young citizens. Thank you.

Testimony submitted by:

Jesse White-Fresé, Executive Director
Connecticut Association of School Based Health Centers
203-230-9976
jesse@ctschoolealth.org
www.ctschoolealth.org
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